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Agency News

Changes to state employee compensation and benefits take effect Sept. 1

The actions of the 83rd Texas Legislature had a positive impact on compensation and retirement benefits for current Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) employees, improving the long-term fiscal stability of the employee retirement program and increasing compensation for state employees. These changes go into effect on September 1.

Most state employees will receive a 1 percent salary increase in fiscal year (FY) 2014, with a \$50 monthly minimum, followed by a 2 percent increase in FY 2015, also with a \$50 monthly minimum. TDCJ's uniformed security staff will receive a 5 percent pay raise effective the first year of the biennium, and licensed peace officers employed by the Office of Inspector General will also receive a salary adjustment effective September 1.

For current state employees, most existing retirement provisions remain unchanged, though there will be a slight increase in both state and employee contributions to ensure the fiscal health of the Employees Retirement System (ERS) retirement fund; details

***Certify your
tobacco-use
status and keep
it up to date***

can be found on the ERS legislative webpage. The TDCJ website provides a summary of the new retirement provisions, along with a detailed overview of how the general appropriations bill will impact the agency.

The new retirement provisions will apply to new state employees hired on or after September 1. Current employees will be unaffected by these changes, though the retiree health insurance provisions may impact a small number of agency employees.

Beginning in September, all Texas Employees Group Benefits Program (GBP) health insurance plan members must certify their status as tobacco users or nonusers. GBP members who have not certified their tobacco-use sta-

tus will be charged a monthly tobacco-user premium to include any dependents over 18, even if they don't use tobacco. Tobacco users who don't certify their status risk a penalty, fraud investigation or termination from the GBP health plans.

If you are certified as non-user and start using tobacco, you must immediately update your tobacco-use status, and the same must be done for any dependents. The additional premium will start at the first of the month following the certification.

You can certify your tobacco-use status by signing into your Employees Retirement System (ERS) account at www.ers.state.tx.us. Click on the Tobacco User Certification link under the My Insurance Information tab and follow the instructions.

You can also certify your tobacco-use status by contacting your unit or department human resources representative, or calling ERS toll-free at 866-399-6908.

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Other changes to state health care benefits include:

- HealthSelect rates increased by an average of 6.5 percent, Community First premiums increased by an average of 12 percent, and Scott & White premiums increased by an average of 6 percent.
- Dental Health Maintenance Organization (DHMO) premiums increased an average of 7 percent. State of Texas Dental Choice Plan premiums remain the same.
- The TexFlex annual health care contribution limit has been reduced from \$5,000 to \$2,496.
- The Short-term Disability carrier will change to Aon Hewitt and premium rate increases to 30 cents per each \$100 of insurance salary. The Long-term Disability carrier also changes to Aon Hewitt, but premiums remain the same.
- A state employee who is a reserve law enforcement officer will be granted five work-days every two years to complete continuing education program hours required to remain licensed as a peace officer. ●